

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2330

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to a crab pot buoy tag program.

Brief Description: Modifying provisions concerning the administration of a crab pot buoy tag program.

Sponsors: By Representatives Blake, Buck, Upthegrove, Linville, Sump and B. Sullivan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 1/10/06 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/25/06, 98-0.

Passed Senate: 3/1/06, 47-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Charges out-of-state crab fishers a fee to participate in the Dungeness crab fishery in the federal coastal waters off Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chandler, Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Hunt, Kagi and Orcutt.

Staff: Amy Van Horn (786-7168).

Background:

There are two different closed commercial fisheries for Dungeness crabs in Washington. One fishery is operated for the Puget Sound, and the other is limited to coastal waters. To catch crabs commercially, Washington boats must have a license for the appropriate fishery.

Crabs are caught using crab pots. Each crab pot must be attached to a buoy and fished individually. In both fisheries, each buoy must be marked clearly with a tag that contains the name or license number of the person using that specific pot. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) manages a buoy tag program in each fishery and is authorized to charge a fee to the holders of Dungeness crab licenses to pay for the production of the tags and the management of the tag programs. Each buoy tag costs 70 cents, paid in an annual fee.

Revenue from the fees are deposited into either the Puget Sound Crab Pot Buoy Tag Account or the Washington Coastal Crab Pot Buoy Tag Account. These are non-appropriated accounts used to pay for the buoy tags and administration of the buoy tag programs.

The Crab Pot Buoy Tag Program began in the Puget Sound fishery in 2001, and in the coastal fishery in 2005. Coastal crab fishers from out of state are not required to pay the buoy tag fee for crab pots fished off Washington's coast. The Department estimates that there are about 15,000 such crab pots.

Summary of Bill:

The bill charges a buoy tag fee to holders of out-of-state crab fishing licenses who participate in Washington's coastal fishery. Out-of-state crab fishers must purchase and place Washington buoy tags on their crab pots when fishing in the federal waters off the Washington coast.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: With the federal government's authorization, last year the Department began its crab pot buoy tag program in federal coastal waters. The program exists to reimburse the Department for its costs. The program already charges out-of-state crabbers the buoy tag fee, but the legislation last year was unclear on the Department's authority to do so. This bill makes it clear that anyone who crabs in the federal waters off the Washington coast must pay the buoy tag fee. The stakeholders support the bill.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Phil Anderson, Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fishers.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.